



Welcome home, *útlendingur* (foreigner)

By Sandra Smithers Garciarúiz

As a group of friends face the challenges of moving to a new country, these young volunteers wonder whether they made the right choice, and which adventures will this Nordic land bring upon them.

We were driving through the dark in a small road in South Iceland. The wind could almost shake our little rental car and only our lights were keeping us on what appeared to be the correct road. The ocean was on our left but it was almost like a stain on the ground, dividing the shore and the sea.

We were exhausted. And as we drove I started thinking about a conversation I had with my roommates the week before... A Greek, a Portuguese, an Ukrainian, a Slovak, three Germans, and a Mexican living in the same apartment, what a power combo. We were wondering if we made the right decision moving to Iceland, I had my doubts. One of them said: "I moved here for the challenge." And it really was a challenge.

Moving to a new country is never easy, and a freezing small island didn't make it easier.

After a few hours we arrived to this little town called Reykholt. It was late and there were no cars around, or people, or anything at all.

We got to very small side road covered with ice, and finally we found a small cabin in the middle of nowhere. "Here we are" said Jón, our first Icelandic friend. He suggested a little get away from the city. Our new routine was very overwhelming and for us, moving to our new home was not happening the way we thought it would, so we got away to the countryside.

We went inside as fast as we could because it was freezing. We started talking, made some Icelandic hot dogs to eat, and after that, my friend Neitah suggested we go for a dip at the outdoor jacuzzi. I thought she had to be crazy! It was literally snowing! But we did, and it was amazing. As the snowflakes fell on top of our heads, the water was keeping us warm; and as the night got colder, our bond got stronger. I will always cherish that night.

It was past midnight and the water began to cool off. I told my friends: "Okay, maybe we should go inside now! I feel like my ears are going to fall from my body." I was about to stand on my feet when Jón said, "Wait, the best is yet to come." I looked at him confused. He just smiled, and a few seconds later he looked upon the sky and said "Welcome home". The sky was covered in green and purple lights. They danced in such a beautiful way you could almost listen to music and its rhythm. It looked alive, so we made no sound, as if a simple "wow" would scared them away. We just stayed there, on a lukewarm jacuzzi, as we watched one of the best and most magnifiqu shows the earth has granted us with.

No one talked, but we all thought the same. "We just made the best decision of our lives".